

Senate. They lost the debate, so a couple weeks ago they changed the rules of the game in the middle of the fourth quarter. They triggered the so-called nuclear option because salvaging ObamaCare and insulating cap-and-trade fee increases from meaningful judicial review were just two important ideological battles that this administration wanted to get done one way or the other.

But, as I said, the end game for this scheme has been clear ever since it was formulated. So I wasn't surprised to read media accounts confirming the reasons the Democrats broke the Senate rules in order to get these nominees confirmed.

For instance, on November 23, The Hill newspaper ran an article with this headline: "Filibuster change clears path for Obama climate regs crack-down." The Hill newspaper had this to say:

Green groups might be the biggest winners from Senate Democrats' decision to gut the minority party's filibuster rights on nominations. Their top priority—President Obama's second-term changes on climate change—is likely to have a better shot at surviving challenges once Obama's nominees are confirmed for the crucial U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

The Washington Post wrote:

Democrats say the shift in the court will be especially important given that Obama's legislative proposals have little chance to prevail in the GOP controlled House. . . . The most contentious issues likely to face the appeals court are climate change regulations being pursued by the EPA. . . . The measures represent Obama's most ambitious effort to combat climate change in his second term—coal-fired power plants are a key source of emissions—at a time when such proposals have no chance of passage in Congress.

The same Washington Post article acknowledged the importance of removing the judicial check on ObamaCare.

The court is expected to hear a series of other legal challenges as well, including lawsuits related to elements of the Affordable Care Act, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and new air-quality standards.

Here is how one liberal environmental media outlet described the change:

When the Senate Democrats blew up the filibuster Thursday, they didn't just rewrite some rules. They struck a mortal blow to a tradition that has blockaded effective action on climate change.

According to media reports, it was these same liberal interest groups that pressured the majority leader to break the rules in order to change the rules. According to The Hill newspaper:

[The] Sierra Club was part of a coalition of liberal groups and unions that pressured Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID to limit the use of the filibuster through a majority vote.

So if there was any doubt whatsoever about why the other side took such drastic action—changing the very historic process of the Senate—there should not be any doubt any longer. The other side could no longer stand up

to the more extreme wing of their party. Under pressure from those interest groups, the other side willy-nilly tossed aside some 225 years of Senate history and tradition.

What is more, by joining the majority leader and voting to break the rules, every Senator who did so empowered the President to install judges whose appointments are specifically designed to rubberstamp the President's regulatory agenda. No one is going to be able to hide from this vote. Not only is this a power grab, it is much more than that. It is the erosion of a constitutional principle which has been established since 1787—and stated very clearly in the Federalist Papers—why the separation of powers is so important to our government. It was to make sure that no one person has all the power. The White House is so committed to a policy agenda that the American people don't want that it co-opted the majority of the Senate in its scheme to remove a meaningful judicial check on the executive branch of government and their agenda.

This is about a White House trying to rig the game so it can impose its cap-and-trade fee increases on the American people even though the American people don't support it. This is about a last-ditch effort to salvage ObamaCare and regulations, such as the IRS rule imposing the employer mandate penalty in 34 States, which is in direct conflict with the statute. How will they do it? By installing judges the White House believes will rubberstamp their edict.

I urge my colleagues to stand up to this White House, stand up to the radical liberal interest groups. Don't cast your vote for cap-and-trade fee increases and for judges that will rubberstamp that and don't cast another vote for ObamaCare. Instead, vote against this nomination. It is not needed.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Patricia Millett to serve on the D.C. Circuit, the second most important court in the nation. Ms. Millett, who is currently in private practice, is recognized as one of the leading appellate lawyers in the country. She has argued 32 cases before the Supreme Court and dozens more in other appellate courts.

Ms. Millett served in the Solicitor General's office under both Democratic and Republican presidents. Seven former Solicitors General including prominent Republicans Paul Clement, Ted Olson and Ken Starr—sent a letter in support of Ms. Millett saying she "has a brilliant mind, a gift for clear, persuasive writing, and a genuine zeal for the rule of law. Equally important, she is unfailingly fair-minded."

At her hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, no Senator questioned Ms. Millett's qualifications or fitness for the Federal bench. She is simply an outstanding nominee. Ms. Millett is also a proud product of Illi-

nois. She grew up in Marine, a small town in the southern part of the state. Her mother was a nurse and her father was a history professor at Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville.

Ms. Millett graduated summa cum laude from the University of Illinois and magna cum laude from Harvard Law School. She clerked for 2 years for Judge Thomas Tang on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

She is part of a military family. Her husband Robert King served in the Navy and was deployed as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Ms. Millett also comes highly recommended by distinguished members of the Illinois legal community.

I received a letter from Patrick Fitzgerald, the former U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, expressing "strong support" for Ms. Millett's nomination and urging "prompt consideration of her candidacy on the merits."

I also received a letter from 28 prominent attorneys including former Illinois Governor James Thompson, a Republican, and current Illinois State Bar Association president Paula Holderman.

They expressed their strong support for Ms. Millett, saying that "she embodies the evenhandedness, impartiality, and objectivity required for the federal judiciary, as evidenced by her more than 10 years of service in the Solicitor General's office in both the Clinton and Bush Administrations."

The bottom line is that Ms. Millett is an outstanding nominee with broad support from across the ideological spectrum. There is no question that she is well-qualified to serve on the bench, and she will serve with distinction.

I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, there are some good things that are going on, and I wish to talk about that.

First, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business until 6:15 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE GOOD NEWS

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, there are some tough times around here, but I usually look for the good news. There is good news. Would anyone have believed 6 months ago that most of the chemical weapons in Syria would be dismantled at this point? In our wildest expectations we could not have expected that. But for the technicalities and specifics of the inspection,